

CITY OF ROCKVILLE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

HISTORIC DESIGNATION EVALUATION

STAFF ANALYSIS

April 10, 2001

MEETING NO.: 4-01

SUBJECT: 731 West Montgomery Avenue

MEETING DATE: 3/20/01, continued to 4/17/01

OWNER: Seventh Day Adventist Church of Rockville.



STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends that 731 West Montgomery Avenue be found eligible for designation as a contributing resource in a historic district, but that 731 West Montgomery Avenue does not meet the criteria for designation as a single site Rockville Historic District in accordance with the adopted criteria, attachment A.

BACKGROUND

731 West Montgomery Avenue is located in the City of Rockville in West End Park. Vernon Joseph and Maude B. McCrossin purchased the property in 1941. They built the house shortly afterward and lived there until 1950 when it was sold to James Sullivan and then Kenneth C. and Rose C. Craglow in 1952. The house is a frame one-and-a-half story Craftsman-style bungalow with asbestos wood-grain shingle siding. The front porch railing has been altered and several additions have been put on the rear of the house. In addition, the house had an interior fire, which resulted in modern printed Masonite paneling to be installed. The house has not been maintained.

The house appeared to be an intact example of a frame Craftsman-style and over 50 years old. Therefore, the site was referred by the Preservation staff to the Historic District Commission for evaluation to determine architectural, cultural or historical significance to the City of Rockville in accordance with the requirements of the adopted City of Rockville Environmental Guidelines. If the HDC finds that the property meets the criteria for a single site historic designation, it will submit that recommendation to the Mayor and Council.

EVALUATION PROCESS

Notices of the HDC evaluation were sent via first class mail to owners of record located within ¼ mile of the property, nearby Citizen's Associations, and other interested parties on March 15, 2001. The agenda for the evaluation meeting was also posted on the city's web page.

One citizen commented on 731 West Montgomery Avenue at the hearing on March 20, 2001:

Rosalie Smith, 3 Nelson Street, is an adjacent property owner. She stated that the property had been known as the "cottage on the corner with the beautiful yard" for many years while the original owners and subsequent owner lived there. She noted that the Craglow family took great pride in the yard and garden. It was purchased by the Seventh Day Adventist Church and was renovated for low-income housing. It had very hard use and little maintenance for the last 10 years. The neighbors frequently objected to the appearance of the property and the grounds, uncontrolled dogs, and vermin. She said the interior had burned and is in worse condition than the exterior. She noted that a barber had owned the property before the Craglows purchased it and had changed the interior arrangement and put on an addition.

She stated that although the house had been an asset when owned by the Craglow family, it is not one of a kind and is presently in poor condition. She concluded that it was not eligible for designation. Mrs. Smith's husband, Marvin Smith, telephoned staff after the meeting to concur with his wife's comments and conclusion.

Acting Chair Moloney asked staff to provide a site plan showing the house on the lot and the adjacent lots for the April meeting and asked that the Church be contacted for comment.

The record closed on April 2, 2001 at the close of business. No additional testimony or comments were received prior to the record closing,

CRITERIA AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Historic and Cultural Significance

Criteria:

- Has character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the **City**
- Has character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the **County**
- Has character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the **State**
- Has character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the **Nation**
- Is the site of a significant historic event
- Is identified with a person or a group of persons who influenced society
- Exemplifies the cultural, economic, social, political or historic heritage of the County and its communities

Architectural and Design Significance

Criteria:

- Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction
- Represents the work of a master
- Possesses high artistic values
- Represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction, or
- Represents an established or familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or county due to its singular physical characteristic or landscape.

Historic and Cultural Significance:

The house is a modest example of a type of 1940s housing that is common to Rockville, Montgomery County, and surrounding areas. Its significance, if any, would be to the City. Neither the McCrossin family nor the Craglow family has been shown to influence society, nor were they major participants in city government, local politics, or in civic affairs. A significant historic event has not been shown to occur at the site. It is therefore staff's conclusion that the property at 731 West Montgomery Avenue is not identified with a person or group of persons who influenced society, nor is it the site of a significant historic event, nor does it exemplify the cultural, economic, social, political or historic heritage of the County or City.

Architectural and Design Significance:

The house is an example of a vernacular Craftsman-style frame bungalow that was popular from 1910 to the 1940s. The original form and setting are largely unaltered, but the house itself does not possess design significance. It does embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction. Numerous examples of this type of vernacular residential construction can be found in Rockville and in the county.

The house does not represent the work of a master. It is a vernacular example of construction and was likely assembled from a mail order kit or built by a local builder.

The house does not possess high artistic value. It is a modest and common variety of its type.

The house does not represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.

It does not represent an established or visual feature of the neighborhood, community or county due to its singular physical characteristic or landscape.

It is the conclusion of staff that the property at 731 West Montgomery Avenue is not identified with a person or group of persons who influenced society, nor is it the site of a significant historic event. Although the structure is a recognizable example of a typical 1940's Craftsman bungalow-style house, it is not unique to the City and not sufficient to render the site significant to the City. In addition, a single site historic district requires that several of the designation

criteria be met, unlike a multiple site district, which does include typical examples of less significance as contributing resources. The property at 731 West Montgomery Avenue would definitely be eligible as a contributing resource in a historic district, but does not meet the more stringent criteria necessary for designation as a single site.

Staff therefore recommends that the house and property at 731 West Montgomery Avenue be found not eligible for designation as a single site historic district based on applicable cited criteria and findings.
